NEWS ROUNDUP
07 OCTOBER 2026 | 08:00 am

- Climateflation is here: Why importing food isn't enough anymore
- Albay mulls increasing fund allocation for agri as preparation for 'Super El Niño'
- Marcos pushes nationwide expansion of solar-powered irrigation
- 40 years after Chernobyl, Italy greenlights a return to nuclear energy
- Leaders visit Pacific's Tuvalu on frontline of climate change
- Supreme Court hears key climate change lawsuit, but procedural question remains
- ASEAN urged to set shared storm, climate standards for cross-border power lines
- Revealed: the methane mega-leaks from UN climate summit host Turkey

CCC IN THE NEWS:

- CCC deploys roving academy to beef up LGU capacity in climate adaptation

BUSINESS MIRROR

Climateflation is here: Why importing food isn't enough anymore

The ongoing war in the Middle East may have been the major driver of inflation in many parts of the world, but a study pointed to another culprit that will exert considerable pressure on consumer prices in the years to come. A Bloomberg report published on September 30 warned that projected warming is expected to add up to 3.23 percentage points annually to food inflation and 1.18 percentage points to headline inflation by 2035. The report quoted analysts from international research firm Zero Carbon Analytics, which mapped food price spikes between 2022 and 2026.

DAILY TRIBUNE

Albay mulls increasing fund allocation for agri as preparation for 'Super El Niño'
By: Shiena M. Barrameda

NAGA CITY – The looming threat of "Super El Niño" and its possible impact on agriculture and fisheries has prompted the Albay provincial government to plan to increase its fund allocation for the said sector for up to P100 million for the coming year.

Marcos pushes nationwide expansion of solar-powered irrigation
By: Raffy Ayeng

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. is pushing for the nationwide expansion of solar-powered irrigation systems to cut farming costs, strengthen food security and make agriculture more resilient to drought and climate change.

MANILA BULLETIN

40 years after Chernobyl, Italy greenlights a return to nuclear energy

ROME (AP) — Italy's Senate gave final approval to legislation paving the way for a return to nuclear power nearly four decades after the Chernobyl disaster prompted the country to abandon atomic energy.

MANILA STANDARD

Leaders visit Pacific's Tuvalu on frontline of climate change
By: Ben Strang

FUNAFUTI, TUVALU — More than a dozen leaders visited the tiny Pacific nation of Tuvalu on Tuesday for a brief look at a once-vibrant ecosystem wiped out due to climate change.

OSV NEWS

Supreme Court hears key climate change lawsuit, but procedural question remains
By: Kate Scanlon

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — In the first case of its new term Oct. 5, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a lawsuit from officials in Boulder, Colorado, against two major oil companies over climate change.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

ASEAN urged to set shared storm, climate standards for cross-border power lines
By: John Lester Naguna

PASAY CITY (PIA) — Connecting Southeast Asia's national power grids will require common climate and design standards to ensure severe weather in one country does not trigger power disruptions across borders, energy officials and analysts said Monday at the Philippine International Convention Center.

THE GUARDIAN

Revealed: the methane mega-leaks from UN climate summit host Turkey
By: Damian Carrington and Ruth Michaelson and Ayça Aldatmaz in Istanbul

Exclusive: Cop31 leader calling for global curbs on climate-heating gas has landfills producing some of world's worst plumes

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

CCC deploys roving academy to beef up LGU capacity in climate adaptation
By: Ana-Liza S. Macatangay

LEGAZPI CITY (PIA) — For communities that frequently face flooding and other climate-related hazards, knowing how to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters is crucial.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS MIRROR

Climateflation is here: Why importing food isn't enough anymore

The ongoing war in the Middle East may have been the major driver of inflation in many parts of the world, but a study pointed to another culprit that will exert considerable pressure on consumer prices in the years to come. A Bloomberg report published on September 30 warned that projected warming is expected to add up to 3.23 percentage points annually to food inflation and 1.18 percentage points to headline inflation by 2035. The report quoted analysts from international research firm Zero Carbon Analytics, which mapped food price spikes between 2022 and 2026.

The findings of the analysts, according to the Bloomberg report, are part of the growing body of research into how climate change is reshaping inflation, a phenomenon some economists dub "climateflation." Joanne Bentley-McKune, a climate scientist and lead author of the Zero Carbon Analytics briefing, said "climateflation" represents a permanent rise in everyday living costs driven by fossil fuel dependency and extreme weather destruction. These two factors, she said, will increase the budgets of households worldwide and lock in persistent inflation.

The Philippines's September inflation print is signaling the difficulties faced by consumers are caused not only by fuel price spikes, but also by supply disruptions created by strong typhoons. And even before producers and consumers could heave a sigh of relief because the state weather bureau had already declared the end of the habagat or monsoon season, El Niño is already threatening to wreak havoc on the country's food production. In late September, the DA reported that El Niño ravaged crops across various plantations worth P6.87 billion and affected 223,214 farmers. (See, "Farmers incur more than P6B in losses due to El Niño," in the BusinessMirror, September 28, 2026).

While the Philippines has yet to feel the wrath of a strong El Niño, the state must see to it that it is ready to protect both planters and consumers from predatory traders who will buy agricultural goods at low prices then sell them at a huge profit. These traders are undaunted by the existence of laws, such as the Price Act, which imposes fine and imprisonment on violators. It may be time for lawmakers to update the policy on price stability given the threat of climate change and the continuing dependence of the country on imports.

As the planet's temperature continues to rise, the long-term goal of the state should be to build the necessary facilities where planters can store food. Throwing away produce due to the lack of buyers only proves that the Philippines still lacks cold storage facilities that are accessible to planters. Without this, farmers would only be forced to throw away crops since they will rot anyway, which is akin to throwing away money.

Inflation in the Philippines was driven by high food prices in recent years. This took place despite the fact that the country continued to import food from other countries to beef up domestic supply. Based on the latest inflation print, importing food is no longer enough to beat

inflation in the face of climate change, and that policymakers must now look within the Philippines's borders for solutions.

DAILY TRIBUNE

Albay mulls increasing fund allocation for agri as preparation for 'Super El Niño'

By: Shiena M. Barrameda

NAGA CITY – The looming threat of "Super El Niño" and its possible impact on agriculture and fisheries has prompted the Albay provincial government to plan to increase its fund allocation for the said sector for up to P100 million for the coming year.

The Albay Provincial Information Office said that Albay Gov. Noel Rosal has confirmed to attendees of the 4th National Agriculture and Fisheries Technology Exhibition (NAFTE) last week in Legazpi City that the provincial government will be raising the fund allocation from the P25 million this year to around P50 million to P100 million for 2027.

Rosal said that the additional funding will further boost the province's preparations for the effects of the exceptionally strong El Niño that experts have warned will affect the country until March of 2027.

He added that the increased funding will be used to bolster the provincial government's agriculture and fisheries programs, in the review of existing but unused irrigation systems, for agricultural inputs provision, and in other assistance for farmers and fisherfolks.

In a separate statement to media, Albay Provincial Agricultural Office Officer-in-Charge Daryl John Buenconsejo assured that his office is preparing an El Niño Mitigation Plan in coordination with the Albay Public Safety and Emergency Management Office in anticipation of the "Super El Niño."

Seeds, seedlings, and fertilizers, are also ready for distribution to local government units in Albay with reported agricultural damage, Buenconsejo added.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration that the country will be experiencing significantly reduced rainfall starting this month, leading to severe dry spells and drought risks. The Climate Change Commission also warns that urban heat indices could soar as high as 50°C.

Marcos pushes nationwide expansion of solar-powered irrigation

By: Raffy Ayeng

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. is pushing for the nationwide expansion of solar-powered irrigation systems to cut farming costs, strengthen food security and make agriculture more resilient to drought and climate change.

Acting Executive Secretary Ralph Recto said the National Irrigation Administration's Solar-Powered Pump Irrigation Program is targeting 10,000 sites nationwide by 2030.

NIA currently operates 4,036 solar-powered irrigation sites across 43 provinces in all 17 regions, including 2,147 in Luzon, 1,102 in the Visayas and 787 in Mindanao.

"The President's mandate is to ensure that farmers have reliable irrigation without depleting their income on irrigation costs," Recto said.

Under NIA's Vision 2030 roadmap, the government aims to serve two million farmers, irrigate an additional 100,000 hectares of agricultural land and move toward net-zero energy use in irrigation.

The systems use solar energy to power water pumps, reducing dependence on diesel and exposure to fuel price swings.

"This is a long-term investment in food security. Every peso farmers save on diesel can instead be used for seeds, fertilizer, equipment and other needs that directly improve their productivity and income," Recto said.

NIA is also developing an artificial intelligence-based monitoring system that will use real-time data on water availability, soil conditions and irrigation requirements.

The agency said existing solar-powered systems can provide six to eight hours of irrigation daily.

In Bacarra, Ilocos Norte, 12 solar-powered irrigation units serving 340 hectares helped lower irrigation expenses and support up to three cropping cycles a year.

In Bukidnon, AI-assisted irrigation scheduling has been tested using satellite data and soil-moisture monitoring, while solar-powered irrigation facilities in Pangasinan continued operating during the prolonged power outage caused by Typhoon Egay in 2023.

"We want to move from traditional irrigation to smart, digital and climate-resilient water management," Recto said.

MANILA BULLETIN

40 years after Chernobyl, Italy greenlights a return to nuclear energy

ROME (AP) — Italy's Senate gave final approval to legislation paving the way for a return to nuclear power nearly four decades after the Chernobyl disaster prompted the country to abandon atomic energy.

The measure cleared the upper house 81-51 with seven abstentions. It marks a major step in Premier Giorgia Meloni's drive to bolster energy security and meet climate goals, even though the construction of possible new reactors is still years away.

The bill, which earlier passed the lower Chamber of Deputies, establishes a legal framework for next-generation nuclear technologies. It authorizes the government to draft implementing decrees over the next 12 months covering reactor licensing, safety standards, waste management and criteria for future sites.

The vote puts Italy on a path toward reintroducing nuclear power after voters twice rejected it in national referendums, first in the aftermath of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster and again following Japan's Fukushima accident in 2011.

Gilberto Pichetto Fratin, minister for the environment and energy security, said the vote marked a historic step forward for Italy.

"Nuclear isn't a return to the past," he said. "When integrated with renewables, it's a winning technology, which can give extraordinary results for our energy security."

Italy seeks energy security in resuming nuclear

Meloni's government argues that rising electricity demand, climate targets and energy security concerns exposed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine justify bringing nuclear energy back into the country's power mix.

Rather than reviving the large reactors of the past, the government is focusing on small modular reactors, or SMRs, and other advanced technologies that supporters say could be safer, more flexible and quicker to build.

The legislation does not authorize the construction of any reactors. Instead, it creates the regulatory foundation needed before future projects can be proposed, assessed and approved.

Italy was once among Europe's nuclear pioneers, operating four reactors before a 1987 referendum effectively ended the program. Since then, the country has relied heavily on imported energy and has become one of Europe's largest consumers of electricity generated by nuclear plants in neighboring countries.

The government says electricity demand could rise substantially in coming years as homes, businesses and transportation become increasingly electrified and as data centers and other energy-intensive technologies expand.

Broader acceptance of nuclear energy is growing

Italy's move comes amid a broader European debate over nuclear power's role in cutting carbon emissions and reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels. Countries including France and Poland are investing in new nuclear projects or planning major expansions.

Public attitudes in Italy appear to have shifted. A June 2026 survey by research firm Only Numbers found that about 55% of Italians support next-generation nuclear plants, with backing strongest among younger generations who have no direct memory of Chernobyl.

Even so, significant obstacles remain before any reactors could be built.

Italy still lacks a permanent national repository for radioactive waste from its previous nuclear program, with waste continuing to be stored at temporary facilities around the country. Future reactor projects and waste storage sites are also expected to face opposition from local communities.

Energy analysts have questioned the economics of nuclear power, pointing to high construction costs and the lack of commercially proven SMR projects operating at scale in Europe. Industry estimates place the cost of a single 300-megawatt SMR at between 3 billion and 6 billion euros ($3.5 billion and $7 billion), excluding additional infrastructure and grid expenses.

Environment groups Greenpeace Italy, WWF Italia, the Kyodo Club and Legambiente called the legislation an "empty box filled with false promises" that went against the will of Italian voters in past referendums.

"Nuclear power does not solve any of the many problems Italy currently faces, in the midst of its second energy crisis in the last four years," the groups said in a joint statement.

New reactors still a long way off

Michele Governatori, a senior energy adviser at climate and energy think tank ECCO, welcomed the creation of a regulatory framework but said it would likely expose limited private-sector appetite for new nuclear projects.

"Having a regulatory framework in place is positive, but it will also make clear the limited interest of private investors in technologies that are either not competitive today or not yet ready, such as SMRs," he said.

Governatori also said that Italy should focus on measures already available to cut energy costs and reduce reliance on fossil fuels, including electrification, energy efficiency, renewable energy, storage capacity and power-grid upgrades.

Environmental groups and opposition parties have already signaled resistance to the government's plans and could challenge future projects once specific reactor and waste-storage sites are proposed.

MANILA STANDARD

Leaders visit Pacific's Tuvalu on frontline of climate change

By: Ben Strang

FUNAFUTI, TUVALU — More than a dozen leaders visited the tiny Pacific nation of Tuvalu on Tuesday for a brief look at a once-vibrant ecosystem wiped out due to climate change.

The trip took place on the sidelines of the Pacific "pre-COP" gathering hosted by Fiji and aimed at drawing the world's attention to life on the frontline of global warming.

The meetings are a precursor to the larger UN-sponsored global climate summit — known as COP31 — to be held in Turkey next month.

The South Pacific is among the regions of the world most vulnerable to global warming — from rising seas jeopardizing homes to increasing temperatures causing coral bleaching.

Tuvalu is deeply affected, already laying plans to relocate its population of 10,600 if the island nation is consumed by the ocean.

A marine heatwave in 2024 wiped out an estimated 99.9 percent of the coral that built the remote Tuvalu islands.

"The objective of this Tuvalu event is for you, leaders, to experience and feel climate change first-hand, from being in the frontline of the impact of climate change," Tuvalu Prime Minister Feleti Teo told visiting officials.

Only a handful of leaders, mostly from the Pacific, showed up to visit.

Among them was Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, whose country is head of this year's climate negotiations but has faced accusations of hypocrisy given its role as a major coal exporter.

'Escalating climate crisis'

With just a few hours on the remote archipelago before flying back to Fiji, there was a rush from organizers to get in as many events as possible.

Hundreds of people wearing traditional garments, floral headdresses and carrying umbrellas to shield them from the heavy rain gathered to greet the leaders, who were accompanied by a small media delegation including AFP.

The group then toured the Tuvalu Coastal Adaptation Project, a landmark reclamation effort that aims to mitigate the impact of rising sea levels.

They also took part in a traditional dialogue session with locals.

“Our communities are not asking for charity,” Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka of co-host Fiji told delegates.

“They are asking for a system that works with a speed required to deliver protection in the midst of an escalating climate crisis,” he said.

“This is a global challenge that we must address.”

Australia has taken a leading role in the pre-COP gathering and defended it as a critical diplomatic event in the face of criticism at home about the cost to taxpayers.

However, Albanese drew criticism from a Tuvalu government adviser, who accused him on Tuesday of disrespect by not wearing a traditional headpiece during an event and for overstepping during the running of the visit.

“Just because we signed the treaty doesn’t mean they can take over our country and our sovereignty,” the adviser told AFP on condition of anonymity.

“That’s how it feels.”

Impact of climate change

Tuvalu is one of the world’s least visited countries, and the highest point in the capital Funafuti is just two metres (6.6 feet) above sea level.

Rising waters have already largely swamped two of Tuvalu’s nine atolls, or ring-shaped coral islands, and scientists fear the entire archipelago could be unliveable by the end of the century.

“You can swim for hours and hours along the reef in the lagoon, just skeleton after skeleton. It’s all dead,” said marine biologist Austin Bowden-Kerby, who visited last year and documented the devastation.

“The very system that created the islands has died. It wasn’t pollution. It wasn’t overfishing. Just a direct result from climate change.”

Local scientist Rajneel Singh told AFP climate change was already affecting the food sources that have long sustained Tuvalu’s population.

“Elders used to fish for red snappers and other things,” he said.

“It’s no longer frequent in the catch. And the sizes of the fish have been reduced as well.

OSV NEWS

Supreme Court hears key climate change lawsuit, but procedural question remains
By: Kate Scanlon

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — In the first case of its new term Oct. 5, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a lawsuit from officials in Boulder, Colorado, against two major oil companies over climate change.

Almost a decade ago, officials in Boulder sued Exxon Mobil and Suncor Energy, alleging they were responsible for climate change in Colorado, such as increased temperatures and the related risk of wildfires. The oil companies have argued that the lawsuit should be thrown out since it was filed in state courts rather than federal ones.

Dan Misleh, founder and executive director of the Catholic Climate Covenant — a Washington-based nonprofit the U.S. bishops helped to form in support of care for creation, told OSV News, “This is a very difficult case.”

“On the one hand, too much of the world still depends on energy produced from fossil fuels,” he said. “On the other hand, scientists have known since early in the 20th century that burning fossil fuels will warm the planet. Fossil fuel companies have also known this fact but have obfuscated it over the years.

“And the questions posed by today’s arguments at the U.S. Supreme Court,” he continued, “are challenging, involving Catholic moral principles such as promoting the common good, examining the principle of subsidiarity (individual, local, national or global responsibility for the harms and costs of fossil fuels), and the preferential option for the poor and solidarity, among others.”

Climate impacts are felt ‘locally, nationally, globally’
“Nevertheless, climate impacts are now being felt locally, nationally and globally in the form of intense storms, prolonged droughts, and terrifying wildfires all fueled by a warmer planet,” he said.

A key legal question in the case is whether the Supreme Court has jurisdiction at the current point in the lawsuit, since the Colorado Supreme Court allowed the case to proceed rather than addressing the merits. Under federal law, the Supreme Court generally has jurisdiction in such cases after final rulings from state supreme courts.

Justices pressed attorneys on the procedural question, with Justice Ketanji Brown acknowledging the case may be “premature” for the Supreme Court to address.

During oral arguments, Kannon Shanmugam, who argued for the oil companies, said, “This court has held for over a century that federal law governs interstate pollution claims. That principle applies with even greater force to claims involving global climate change.”

But Kevin Russell, who represented Boulder, argued that states may pursue remedies for "injuries occurring within their borders, even when the conduct causing those injuries occurred elsewhere."

State law vs. federal law on providing a remedy
"When somebody in New York defames a citizen of Boulder on national television, or somebody in California releases a computer virus on the internet, or a biological virus into the world, and it causes mass damage in Colorado. It has never been thought that only federal law can provide a remedy," he argued.

Care for creation is a key tenet of Catholic social teaching. In September, the International Theological Commission published a new document calling for ecological conversion due to "sin against creation and the Creator," because a failure to be good stewards of the Earth "concerns our relationship with God the Creator, with our neighbors, and with creation itself, distorting the three relationships that define us."

In his landmark encyclical "Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home," Pope Francis, citing the writings of St. John Paul II, wrote, "The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation."

"In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet," Pope Francis wrote.

Misleh said Pope Francis and many other Catholic leaders "have urged us to move away from fossil fuels as fast as possible; they urge us to hear both the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor."

Faith community 'setting example' for less reliance on fossil fuels
"As a faith community, we should be setting the example for a life less dependent on fossil fuels, both as individuals and as an institution," he said. "So regardless of the ultimate outcome of this decision, let's join together to live more simply and preserve our common home for future generations."

In another aspect of the case, Justice Samuel Alito recused himself, meaning the case will be decided by the remaining eight justices, an even number that leaves the potential for a deadlocked outcome and uncertainty for dozens of similar lawsuits.

No official reason for Alito's recusal was given by the court, but some had called for Alito to recuse himself due to financial ties to the energy industry. In May, the court indicated his holdings did not include the companies in the dispute.

A decision in the case, seen as one of the major cases it will hear this year, is expected by the end of the court's term, which typically ends in June.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

ASEAN urged to set shared storm, climate standards for cross-border power lines
By: John Lester Naguna

PASAY CITY (PIA) — Connecting Southeast Asia's national power grids will require common climate and design standards to ensure severe weather in one country does not trigger power disruptions across borders, energy officials and analysts said Monday at the Philippine International Convention Center.

The issue was examined during a technical breakout session, "Defining A Climate Resilience Framework for ASEAN Energy Infrastructure," held alongside the 44th ASEAN Ministers on Energy Meeting (AMEM44) and the 26th ASEAN Energy Business Forum (AEBF-26).

Southeast Asian nations are working toward interconnecting their power networks under the ASEAN Power Grid (APG), backed by a planned USD 27 billion cross-border interconnector pipeline and more than USD 320 billion in wider transmission and distribution investments through 2040. However, forum participants noted that because these physical lines will span multiple countries, regional planning must ensure that national grids are built to withstand severe typhoons, floods, and heat waves.

Recent regional disasters highlighted during the presentation by Aldilla Noor Rakhiemah, Project Manager of the ASEAN Climate Change and Energy Project (ACCEPT II) at ACE, underscored how severe weather continues to test power reliability across member states. In Viet Nam, Typhoon Yagi cut electricity to more than 6.4 million customers in 2024, knocking down sections of 500 kV and 220 kV transmission lines. Severe heat waves in the Philippines in 2025 pushed space-cooling demand to record highs, triggering yellow alerts on the Luzon grid while concurrent floods slowed line repairs. Meanwhile, in Thailand, floods in Songkhla disabled the 1,476-megawatt Chana Power Plant, delaying full restoration into 2026 as operators installed perimeter flood defenses.

"With our progressively interconnected energy systems, strengthening the capability to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from climate-related disruptions becomes increasingly important," said Dr. Zulfikar Yurnaidi, manager of the Energy Modelling and Policy Planning Department at the ASEAN Centre for Energy (ACE).

Because interconnected grids share power flows, participants emphasized that member countries also share operational risk.

Sharon Seah, coordinator of the Climate Change in Southeast Asia Programme at the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, noted that cross-border links require mutual support among power systems.

“When you are interconnected, you have exposure in the same way; you will have to back each other up in your grid systems,” Seah said. She pointed out that Southeast Asia remains underinsured against infrastructure damage, meaning major repair costs often fall directly on public funds and energy off-takers unless resilience is integrated upfront.

Seah added that regional frameworks should remain equitable, ensuring that infrastructure costs and transition adjustments do not burden vulnerable communities.

To align regional infrastructure, panelists outlined several technical and regulatory steps. Jin Han Gan, regional business manager for ABB Electrification Service, called for harmonizing basic electrical standards across member states that currently operate with different voltage profiles and technical readiness levels, while deploying battery energy storage systems (BESS) and microgrids that allow facilities to feed power back into the grid during peak demand.

At the regulatory level, Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Assistant Secretary Dr. Noralene Uy explained that environmental impact screening helps safeguard new assets, noting that the Philippines now enforces high-wind mooring rules for freshwater floating solar, pre-development risk screening for offshore wind projects, and spatial mapping to evaluate project sites against flood basins and fault zones.

In addition, Seah urged governments to generate high-resolution, downscaled climate models, similar to Singapore’s national V3 study based on IPCC science, to give utilities and reinsurers localized projections that directly inform engineering decisions.

A survey presented by ACE project manager Aldilla Noor Rakhiemah found that 80 percent of surveyed energy ministries and utilities under the Heads of ASEAN Power Utilities/Authorities (HAPUA) view climate impacts as highly or quite relevant to their grid planning. However, member states still lack a shared physical resilience indicator and a regional record of storm-driven power outages.

Survey respondents identified technical training workshops (88%), standardized climate datasets (71%), a shared regional platform (70%), and formal data-exchange agreements (65%) as their top operational priorities.

AMEM44 and AEBF-26 continue through Oct. 9 under the theme “Clean Energy Unlocked: A Stronger ASEAN,” as member states discuss the Enhanced APG Memorandum of Understanding and prepare for the release of the 9th ASEAN Energy Outlook. (JLN/PIA-NCR)

THE GUARDIAN

Revealed: the methane mega-leaks from UN climate summit host Turkey

By: Damian Carrington and Ruth Michaelson and Ayça Aldatmaz in Istanbul

Exclusive: Cop31 leader calling for global curbs on climate-heating gas has landfills producing some of world's worst plumes

Two or three nights each week, the smell descends. Residents of villages on the rural outskirts of Istanbul don't know what the smell is, but they have been plagued by it for years: a smell so bad they have to sleep with their windows closed even during hot summer nights. They know the source, too: the huge Silivri municipal waste dump a few miles away that is belching out stinking gases as food and other organic waste rots.

"The smell is not subtle. It suffocates you," said Kemalettin Özenç, sitting outside a tea shop in the village of Yolçatı. "It's worse when the air is still: sometimes families linger until midnight out here. Even when you go inside it's inescapable."

These gases are more than a local problem. They include methane, a potent climate-heating gas, pouring out of the site in such vast quantities that the plume is visible from space. Satellite surveillance shows that the Silivri landfill is Turkey's worst super-emitting waste site.

In fact, its average emission rate of 7.4 tonnes an hour makes it one of the worst identified anywhere in the world by a team of expert researchers at the University of California (UCLA). The planet-warming impact of this single leak is equivalent to 1.5m gas-guzzling SUVs gunning their engines and there are more super-emitting dumps across Turkey. They stretch from İzmir in the west, to Ankara in the centre and Antalya in the south, many with "mind bogglingly large" leaks, the UCLA researchers said.

The revelation that Turkey has some of the world's worst landfill methane leaks comes at an awkward time: in November, the country will host the next UN global climate summit, Cop31, and has put cutting methane emissions at the top of the action agenda it wants all nations to agree on. Turkey's first lady, Emine Erdoğan, has been a prominent campaigner for zero waste and methane cuts on the global stage – despite the super-plumes now revealed at home – and the president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, said waste management was a priority in a speech he made in June.

'They have the power'

On the ground, the problem has festered for some time. Özenç and a growing crowd of disgruntled people in his town and others around the Silivri landfill have spent years looking for someone to intervene, but the notion of contacting the Istanbul municipality who operate the facility did not cross their minds. Some took to the internet to leave outraged messages about

the smell underneath the dump's listing on Google maps, while Özenç tried to rally people to sign a petition intended for the forestries ministry which oversees several nearby mines.

But in the end, too many were afraid to sign. "They have the power and can say whatever they want," he said, in a sweeping reference to the authorities. Turkey's most notorious maximum security prison looms 30 minutes from Yolçatı: the mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem İmamoğlu, was accused of corruption and detained there in 2025. Özenç and others in the community feared what might happen to them if they were seen to complain too publicly.

Staff from the Istanbul metropolitan municipality's waste management division, İstaç, at the site in Silivri appeared surprised when shown satellite images of the massive gas leak emanating from a spot visible from their office windows. Methane, also known as natural or fossil gas, is transparent, and so the plume coming from the site is invisible to the naked eye.

Fatih Arslan of İstaç cleared his throat while staring intently at the satellite images presented to him by the Guardian. "Well there's not much to say," he said, initially blaming the emissions on areas of the waste site not yet covered with clay after the dumping process. "It's inevitable that this is happening … of course we have to make improvements," he ventured.

Their priority, he explained, was to cover exposed areas of the dump as quickly as possible and trap the methane produced by the rubbish for use as fuel. An on-site facility extracts 6,000 cubic metres of methane an hour from the landfill to burn for energy: letting methane leak into the atmosphere, he said, is therefore a waste.

For the head of the facility, Ebu Bekir Ikinci, the current situation is actually a vast improvement on the past. He showed newspaper headlines from Istanbul in the 1990s, when the streets were piled high with rubbish and, in 1993, methane trapped at a dump exploded, killing 39 people. A year later, Erdoğan became the mayor of the city with a promise to bring in better waste management.

"The baseline scenario we use for emissions from waste is what would happen if the waste was not stored at all," said Arslan, pointing to the deadly scenario from the 1990s. "Compared to that, the emissions now are way better. This is actually very good."

'Mind-bogglingly large' rates

Silivri is the largest landfill in Turkey, processing 10,000 tonnes of waste every day. Another waste dump in outer Istanbul, on the other side of the city in Şile, is also a source of huge methane leaks, pouring 4 tonnes of methane into the atmosphere every hour, the global heating equivalent of about 800,000 SUVs. The UCLA team used satellite data from the Carbon Mapper portal to identify the 10 highest-emitting landfill sites across Turkey.

"Many of these sites have mind-bogglingly large methane emission rates, even in a global context," said Cara Horowitz, who leads the UCLA Stop Methane project, which carried out the

analysis, and is executive director at the Emmett Institute on Climate Change and the Environment. “These are huge leaks, some of the largest single manmade sources of methane emissions in the world,” she added.

Methane emissions cause a quarter of all global heating and there has been a “scary” surge since 2007 that risks triggering catastrophic climate tipping points, scientists have said. However, cutting methane emissions is often relatively easy to do and has a rapid impact because the gas is naturally removed from the atmosphere far faster than carbon dioxide. Some experts call cutting methane the climate “emergency brake”.

Turkey says that as the Cop31 host, zero waste and methane reduction are the highest priority on its action agenda. Murat Kurum, Turkey’s environment minister and the Cop31 president-designate, wrote to the 196 nations due to attend the summit in Antalya, saying: “Reducing methane emissions is among the fastest and most effective strategies for slowing near-term temperature rise. The waste sector therefore represents a critical opportunity for delivering immediate climate benefits.”

However, Turkey’s environment ministry declined to comment when contacted by the Guardian about the nation’s methane super-emitters. The Istanbul municipality also declined to answer questions about the methane emissions at Silivri and refused permission to photograph the site.

Reducing emissions from waste disposal has also been described as the “personal project” of Emine Erdoğan, who is the honorary president of Turkey’s Zero Waste Foundation and chair of the UN Advisory Board on Zero Waste. While opening a “zero waste forum” in June, she noted that some landfills in the world were filled with discarded food while people went hungry, and that food waste causes enormous methane emissions. However, Turkey is not among the 159 countries to have signed the Global Methane Pledge to achieve a 30% reduction in these emissions by 2030.

Waste opportunity

Turkey could become a global leader in cutting methane emissions, Horowitz said, if it managed to clean up its many polluting landfill sites. A suite of tried-and-tested solutions exists across the world, ready for adoption, which start with being aware of the leaks. “Landfills are a significant proportion of the top global methane super-emitters, so just making sure we’re accurately understanding the scale of these emissions is an important first step,” she said.

The official record of greenhouse gas emissions submitted to the UN by Turkey acknowledges that a major contributor to its emissions from the waste sector “is the uncontrolled release of methane gas from landfills into the atmosphere”, and that such gases are meant to be monitored by the environment ministry. However, legislation enacted last August – intended to launch a monitoring mechanism for emissions from select Turkish private interests – only monitors carbon dioxide emissions, and excludes any facilities “using biomass” like landfill.

Methane gas coming off landfills can be captured and used as fuel, as at Silivri. However, Dr Tia Scarpelli, waste sector lead at Carbon Mapper, said: “Not all sites that have gas collection are created equal. It does come down to the design and efficiency of the system and day-to day management practices.” Causes of major leaks can include poor maintenance, failure to keep flares alight when burning off excess methane, or collecting only good quality gas and venting the rest.

A more foolproof way of halting methane leaks is to stop organic waste going into the landfill and rotting in the first place. In South Korea, close to 100% of the country’s food waste is now recycled. “Getting at the real source of the problem is an even better opportunity to reduce methane leaks,” Horowitz said.

Stopping the massive methane leaks in Turkey is a climate imperative, but may yet fall victim to politics: Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir and several other big cities remain under municipal opposition control, despite a prolonged crackdown on Turkey’s largest opposition party. Imamoğlu and hundreds of other former employees from the Istanbul municipality are on trial on corruption charges, and the government in Ankara is eager to claim the opposition are incapable of running Turkey’s largest city, including its waste management.

After his petition went nowhere, Özenç said he and other communities in Silivri living with the unbearable smell feared another instance of what he saw as a “cover up”.

“It’s not like we have a say anyway,” he added. “What can you do? The moment you talk about this, there is silence.”

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

CCC deploys roving academy to beef up LGU capacity in climate adaptation
By: Ana-Liza S. Macatangay

LEGAZPI CITY (PIA) — For communities that frequently face flooding and other climate-related hazards, knowing how to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters is crucial.

That is the aim of the Climate Change Commission's (CCC) Center for Local Leadership, Integrated Monitoring, Training and Education (CLLIMATE) Roving Academy, which launched its pilot program in Bicol from September 28 to 29 at the PAGCOR Multipurpose Event Center in Naga City.

The capacity-building activity aimed to help local government units (LGUs) better understand climate change and utilize available climate data, projections, risk assessments, and planning tools to develop responses tailored to their communities' needs.

Lloyd delos Angeles, the officer-in-charge of the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office in Milaor, Camarines Sur, highlighted the urgent need for stronger local climate action in their municipality, where flooding remains a major concern.

During Typhoon Kristine in 2024, floodwaters in Milaor rose over 10 feet in several areas and persisted for more than two weeks, he said.

"Activities like these are very important because they can help us find solutions to the concerns we face, particularly flooding," Delos Angeles said in Filipino.

Delos Angeles said the lessons learned from the CLLIMATE Roving Academy can help the municipality enhance its Local Climate Change Action Plan and identify appropriate measures to address its climate-related concerns.

Beatriz Anne Faustino, chief of the CCC's Strategic Partnerships Division, emphasized the importance of strengthening local capacity, as LGUs are closest to the communities that are directly experiencing the impacts of climate change.

"We wanted to capacitate our LGUs. This will be our pilot; we'll do the same for all our stakeholders. We want to provide them with the right knowledge, build their capacity, and strengthen the local climate action," she said.

The academy introduced participants to essential concepts related to climate change, national climate policies, associated risks, and the roles of LGUs and other stakeholders in implementing these policies at the community level.

Faustino emphasized the need for LGUs to have a solid understanding of climate change in order to develop evidence-based, inclusive, and risk-informed solutions tailored to their communities.

“We want to mobilize, build partnerships, and strengthen local climate action. We need to build the capacity of our local government units, and you are on the ground. You are the frontliners who see firsthand what communities need,” she said.

Faustino said the CLLIMATE Roving Academy is a continuous learning initiative with foundational, intermediate, and advanced levels, enabling LGUs to develop their climate-responsive planning capabilities gradually.

The Bicol region was chosen as the pilot area due to its vulnerability to climate-related hazards, she noted.

The CCC plans to expand this initiative to other regions, with Metro Manila identified as the next area for implementation. (Nicole Frilles contributed to this story/PIA Bicol-Camarines Sur)

=END=